

The End of Western Myths and Traditions in Hemingway 's For Whom the Bell Tolls

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The End of Western Myths and Traditions in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

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I. Introduction

Hemingway is always — no matter what country he is writing about — an American author first and foremost. And while it can be said that his main subject is the human condition, he is always working out the problems of Western myths and traditions as they apply to the American man in the twentieth century. Robert Jordan, the protagonist in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, is the American man fighting for what he believes, working to destroy a major structure which he sees as a threat to the equilibrium of Western peace.

In a letter to Charles Scribner, his publisher, on 15 August 1940, about the picture that was to go on the jacket of the book, he writes,

...the bridge should be a thin, high-arching, metal, cantilever bridge instead of a stone bridge. ... Should be high, thin and spidery looking. ... If bridge is used it must look to be distant and to be bridging a steep gorge. I think it should be foreshortened in the picture as it is to give the impression of a road going up the far mountain.

Tell this in exactly these words to the artist [won't] you?

...if there is any bridge, it must be a steel bridge not a wooden one. If he can't make a metal one like the one in the book then lets have no bridge at all. But no reason why he can't. (Carlos Baker *Selected Letters*, 508)

Given the care that Hemingway went to in order to make sure that the artist's rendition of the bridge was just so... "high, thin, and spidery" and hanging over "a steep gorge" and especially since the actual bridge at that location outside Segovia is a stone bridge, the reader may be excused if he interprets Hemingway's equivocation in the same letter that, "I know its only lightly symbolical and supposed, perhaps, not even to be that." as slightly less than genuine, a situation not particularly unusual with Hemingway or for that matter a good many authors when discussing their own work.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the fascists control both sides of the bridge just as they defend both Christian traditions and Greco-Roman myths throughout the novel. For them, "the road going up the far mountain", the road leading into the realm of the ideal, is open. It is only natural then that the American man, the unbeliever, would see it as a threat to his more pragmatic world view and want to destroy it.

The opinion shared by Fisher, Mellow, Meyers, Nahal and many other scholars and biographers that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a war novel in general and about the Spanish civil war in particular is, I believe, at best, limited. As Stephens has pointed out,

Hemingway's use of his Spanish Civil War experiences in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was, except for a very few instances, concerned with the presentation of emotions and attitudes rather than with images of war. He reported on battlefield actions rather than guerilla activities in his journalism, and except for El Sordo's stand on the hilltop and the guerilla's attack on the bridge, action in the novel included no battle scenes. (283)

The focus of the novel is Robert Jordan's confrontation with European myths and traditions. The focus is not the Spanish Civil War, and it is not war in general though both of these side issues are also strongly dealt with. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a novel of cultural struggle, Western myths and traditions under attack by the rebel forces of a new age. This

fact explains Milton Wolff's disappointment with Hemingway's novel in Denis Brian's *The True Gen* where he complains, "It's not so much what he did but what he didn't do. He could have made a tremendous contribution to left wing literature and antifascist literature" (127) ...but he didn't. And most of the left-wing intellectuals at the time understood this. Although in fairness, he did contribute to the struggle against fascism in the form of straight journalism. He was strongly anti-fascist; however, he was not a communist either. Nevertheless, and unfortunately, it is this distorted view of the novel as a war novel or as strictly an anti-war novel which has led to so many superficial readings of the characters. Critics have been far too eager to move on to what they have believed to be the more important details of Hemingway's politics.

II. Introduction to the Characters

As in all of Hemingway's work, the characters and what they represent are the key to understanding Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Robert Jordan who is the key figure in this novel, is first and always an American man. In the face of those who long to see the story as a romantic fairytale and Robert Jordan as it's hero, Whitlow argues convincingly that,

In response to Maria's most noble of human ethics... Jordan does not offer love and selflessness in return. Despite his professions of love and talk of marriage and Missoula, he offers a uselessly demolished bridge, a handful of dead Fascists, and a substantially larger number of dead friends — an ethic succinctly captured when he tells the sleeping Maria, "We'll be killed but we'll blow the bridge" (p. 371). (39)

Robert is goal oriented. He believes in the systematic scientific destruction of the bridge as the only answer and hope for a future for humankind. Furthermore, he is convinced that he is the answer; and at the end

after he has blown the bridge, he is fully ready to go out like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, guns blazing.

Compared with the scholarship on Pilar, Maria has received little critical attention beyond noting the fact that she is seen to be a weak character whose movements are orchestrated almost entirely by others and in particular by Pilar who ultimately gives her to Robert Jordan to be his lover in the short time he has before his death. Some scholars have brought up the fact that Maria has been gang raped and tortured by the Republican militia, but this has generally been done as an explanation or excuse for her weakness of character. It says nothing about her function in the novel. Nor does it explain why Hemingway bothered to include her in the novel at all. Though for Peter Hays, Robert and Maria's relationship is unconvincing as "an act of commitment and more the creation, on Hemingway's part, of a female object of wish fulfillment" (89), a view which makes Maria a sort of vicarious toy of the author to play with while writing an otherwise interesting novel. Gajdusek makes a fine beginning, stating that "Maria... is also Rabbit that she may be at once the Queen of Heaven and also the reproductive cycle" (25). But then after this one tantalizing sentence he stops and changes the focus of his study.

Over the years there have certainly been no end of opinions about the models for Pilar's character. Some have seen her as one of Hemingway's "bitch goddesses," a phrase that is used frequently in Hemingway scholarship to indicate strong independent often outspoken and manipulative women with minds of their own. Others — because of the obvious link with her name and the shrine of Nuestra Señora del Pilar (Our Lady of the Pillar) in Zaragoza — have tried to draw parallels between her and the Virgin Mary. But Pilar is a very common name in Spain, and the connection seems tenuous at best. Still others have tried to turn her into Gertrude Stein. Comley and Scholes, for example, state that, "Pilar... is a strong woman constructed by blending the maternal or nurturing type with that of the manly lesbian on the model of Gertrude Stein. Pilar's strength is a function of her bisexuality" (46). They make this comment in spite of the fact that Hemingway parodies Stein in the same text with his

famous "a rose is a rose is an onion" lines through Robert Jordan, lines which end up with Stein reduced to a pebble: "a stein is a rock is a boulder is a pebble" (256).

Maria, as her name implies and as Gajdusek has pointed out, represents the Virgin Mary, "the Queen of Heaven" and Mother of God. The tale of her rape and torture, coupled with Pilar's tale of the gruesome murder of the priest, is the tale of the violence suffered by the Church at the hands of ruthless unbelievers. No one forces Maria into Robert Jordan's bed. She goes of her own free will. But it is significant that Pilar who is first and foremost pagan gypsy and Gaia — the earth and the Great Mother — nurtures the affair and in so doing becomes the Aphrodite principle within the Great Mother tradition. As I have shown elsewhere, in *Across the River and Into the Trees* Hemingway would combine both Judeo-Christian traditions and Greco-Roman myths in the character of Renata ("Posing Renata," 73-96). However, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, these remain separate.

III. Robert Jordan & Pilar's Domain

Martin mistakenly assumes that the reason Robert Jordan sleeps outside the cave is that "he is much closer to nature than the others" (60). He writes,

At one point mid-way through the book Fernando tells Jordan, "You have a curious idea to sleep in the open, Don Roberto" (259). Fernando here clearly does not understand that Jordan's senses are already more finely tuned than those of most people, and that he is well along the way to a sense of an ultimate integration with nature. He has become more highly sensitized to his surroundings. (60)

I have no argument with Martin's observation that Jordan has become "highly sensitized to his surroundings"; however, I am not convinced that

he is any “*more* highly sensitized” (emphasis mine) than anyone else. Jordan knows that he must be attentive to his environment or he will die. But this has nothing at all to do with why he sleeps outside.

Robert Jordan sleeps outside the cave because the inside of the cave is not his domain. Robert’s world is the Apolonian world of vertical accomplishments. It is a world without dwelling, without sensuality. The cave itself is Pilar’s world.

The feminine as the giver of shelter and protection encompasses the life of the family and group in the symbol of the house. This aspect appears in the so-called house urns, vessels formed in the shape of houses. Down to our day, the feminine vessel character, originally of the cave, later of the house (the sense of being inside, of being sheltered, protected, and warmed in the house), has always borne a relation to the original containment in the womb. (Neumann 137)

The openness of the hearth and fire is repugnant to Robert because it holds back and invites the traveler to remove his shoes and relax. In ancient times, caves were often associated with cults of the dead. Roaming around the towns and villages, Pablo was useful to the movement; however, swallowed in the belly of the cave, he becomes a harsh symbol of what the cave invites: “The cave, in its relation to the mountain that unites the character of vessel, belly, and earth, also belongs to the dark territory of the underworld” (44). Pilar’s later rage at Pablo is brought about because he has allowed her to destroy him.

The numinous sites of a preorganic life [out of which spring all life], which are experienced in *participation mystique* with the Great Mother, are mountain, cave, stone pillar, and rock — including the childbearing rock — as throne, seat, dwelling place, and incarnation of the Great Mother. (Neumann 260)

It is Pilar's domain which destroys Pablo. And while Robert is never actually conscious of this fact, he intuitively refuses to sleep in it, even when in her command over the elements, Pilar/Gaia brings on the snow to drive him inside.

As Robert Jordan first approaches the cave where the band of guerillas are hiding out, he is impressed because it is so well hidden.

They had come through the heavy timber to the cup-shaped upper end of the little valley and he saw where the camp must be under the rim-rock that rose ahead of them through the trees. ... You did not see it at all until you were up to it and Robert Jordan knew it could not be spotted from the air. Nothing would show from above." (23).

The image here of the approach to the cave, is extremely feminine. And the cave itself is womb-like, almost suffocating in its dark and murky chthonian description. But most importantly, the cave is the domain of Pilar who, as we shall see, is the image of the Great Mother and as such is the earth and vessel of life and death. "At the center of the [Great Mother] schema is the great vessel of the female body, which we do in fact know as a real vessel. Its principal symbolic elements are the mouth, the breasts, and the womb" (44). Neumann further points out that,

In the mysteries of preservation this symbol [of the vessel] is projected upon the cave as sacral precinct and temple and also upon its development as dwelling, tent, house, storeroom, and temple. That is why the building and preparation of the dwelling are so often the prerogative of women. The "sheltering structure" of the vessel gives its form to the grave, the underworld dwelling, as it does to the dwelling house on earth and the temple, the house of the powers, the upper world. (282-83)

For Robert Jordan to enter the cave and remain would be an acquiescence

to dwelling and death.

The cave is a dwelling as well as a tomb ; the vessel character of the Feminine not only shelters the unborn in the vessel of the body, and not only the born in the vessel of the world, but also takes back the dead into the vessel of death, the cave or coffin, the tomb or urn. (45)

The gypsies who are already nomadic sons of the earth sleep within the cave because, as they acknowledge, they are under the authority of Pilar. They have shifted their allegiance from the Tyrant God, the God of Death to the Great Mother who has deposed him. Besides death is on everyone's mind. Pablo's obsession with it infects everyone.

As long as Pablo was a mass murderer, Pilar was happy to support him. But when he stopped killing and began to feel remorse for all of the blood he had spilled, she turned on him with brutal violence. Neumann, speaking of the Great Mother, makes the point that her,

...womb of the earth becomes the deadly devouring maw of the underworld, and besides the fecundated womb and the protecting cave of earth and mountain gapes the abyss of hell, the dark hole of the depths, the devouring womb of the grave and of death, of darkness without light, of nothingness. For this woman who generates life and all living things on earth is the same who takes them back into herself, who pursues her victims and captures them with the snare and net. Disease, hunger, hardship, war above all, are her helpers, and among all peoples the goddess of war and the hunt express man's experience of life as a female exacting blood. This terrible Mother is the hungry earth, which devours its own children and fattens on their corpses. (149)

It is a little disingenuous on her part to pretend to be shocked at Pablo's behavior. After all, the only reason she does not see the final end of the

murders in the cathedral is that as she was scrambling on top of a chair to see along with the drunks, she fell off. Her story is a chronicle of horrors ; it is not a search for absolution.

We know of her thirst for blood also through her story of her former lover, Finito (which means "finite" or "limited" in Spanish) the bullfighter. While Pilar had a sexual relationship with Finito, that is clearly not the glue which held her to him in their relationship. It was his impending death which held her. Neumann makes the claim that, "the Archetypal Feminine is not only a giver and protector of life but, as container, also holds fast and takes back ; she is the goddess of life and death at once" (45). In her story of Finito, she presides over his suffering and death. She is there to stroke him and listen to his prayers. Lederer notes that "bull-fighters, as well as aficionados like Hemingway, are mystics of a sort, and in love with virility and danger and death ; and if they pray, they pray to the Madonna" (178). But here it is Pilar in her role of the Great and Terrible Mother who is being prayed to.

Throughout the telling of her story of Finito, it remains a deep mystery what her attraction is to this poor matador until we see that it is not so much the matador that she is attracted to ; it is rather the bull and death. As the tiny matador is struck again and again in the chest by the flat of the bull's horns, he is torn apart internally until he becomes the sacrifice of blood that the Great Mother needs to "assure the fertility of game, women, and fields, the rising of the sun, and success in warfare" (Neumann 279). After the death of Finito, Pilar immediately,

took up with Pablo who led picador horses in the ring and was like the bulls that Finito had spent his life killing. But neither bull force, nor bull courage lasted, she knew now, and what did last? I last, she thought. Yes, I have lasted. But for what? (172)

Neumann explains the mythic imagery that Hemingway may have drawn from in that "Not only temple, tomb, and house but also the central pillar supporting the structure of the house is a symbol of the Great Mother"

(283); and "The pillar of the Great Goddess evinces her rule over the bull and the lions" (272): first Finito, and then Pablo who is more raging lion, wandering about *seek whom he may destroy* and often indiscriminately.

IV. Robert Jordan

When Robert Jordan first arrives at the cave there is a gypsy guarding the opening of the cave. "Along with the cave and the body vessel, the gate as entrance and womb is a primordial symbol of the Great Mother" (Neumann 158). And as the gypsy is sitting there at the entrance, he is making a trap for catching rabbits, a foreshadowing of the relationship between Robert Jordan and Maria.

The thickness in Robert's throat is not a euphemism for an erection as some scholars have implied. It is rather the awe that still resides in the chest of the U.S. tourist each time he or she enters Chartres or gazes upon a Goya. In spite of her desecrated condition, Robert still finds Maria as beautiful as any American would looking upon Mantegna's painting of the "Death of the Virgin." It is noteworthy, however, that the virgin in Mantegna's "Death of the Virgin" is a chubby, wrinkled up old woman: not at all like "The Death of Virgin" by Joos van Cleve whose virgin with her round unlined face is more like that of a young child; or Hugo van der Goes whose Virgin under the same title is like a perfect marble statue of a beautiful unchanging young woman. Also, while the other Virgins (including those of Blake, Christus, and numerous anonymous paintings of the same title) seem to be only near death or in some intermediate state between death and eternal life, Mantegna's Virgin is clearly dead. If there is an afterlife, it is not apparent in this painting. Thus again, it is noteworthy, that the artistic parallels that Robert Jordan uses to explain what takes his breath away are by and large, religious elements that have long since lost their religious power and significance. For the American, they are merely artifacts that attach him or her to a distant all but lost past. Robert's response is only that these artifacts make him feel like he is part of something larger... a sort of vague belonging to the community of man.

Idema notes that "when enthusiasts for communism such as Robert Jordan, Anselmo, and Joaquin are facing danger and death, they turn to traditional religion — not political ideology" (177). First, Anselmo is a bad example here because he is a Christian, not really a communist anyway. He is fighting on their side because he believes in their cause, not because he has thought through any of the political ramifications of communism toward his religion. Joaquin is just an eighteen year old boy. There is no indication from the text that he has any politics at all. But I think one of Hemingway's points with Joaquin is that in a war, one must take sides; and like Anselmo, Joaquin has chosen to fight against tyranny.

Robert Jordan is another matter altogether. Idema claims that his wondering at the end who has it easier, believers or nonbelievers like himself is a form of turning toward religion. But Robert's language speaks for itself:

Who do you suppose has it easier? Ones with religion or just taking it straight? It comforts them very much but we know there is nothing to fear. It is only missing it that's bad. Dying is only bad when it takes a long time and hurts so much that it humiliates you. (410)

The idea of "taking it straight" is another way of saying facing the facts or the realities of life and death. Jordan's very next sentence begins, "It comforts them very much..." (emphasis mine), clearly excluding himself from those naive others who believe. Unlike the Spanish communists who constantly remind themselves that they don't believe and that they are not supposed to believe, there is no vacillation on Robert's part. Christianity is a nonissue for Robert. He is the twentieth century American man committed to his work and the scientific dispensation of it.

As Robert's relationship with Maria develops, Robert calls her "rabbit," with a small "r". In his letter to his editor, Hemingway made sure that *rabbit* was not capitalized, for it is not a nickname. It is a designa-

tion. But this is not a conscious pagan designation on Robert's part, but rather an associative one related to the way she burrows into him in his sleeping bag.

Nevertheless, while Robert is unaware of it, she is in fact more than a representative of the "reproductive cycle" though she is this also, as Gajdusek has implied. She is also the hope of spiritual regeneration. But the problem that is raised in this context is, what happens when Holy Mother Church has been raped and brutalized. How can she be reintegrated into society.

V. Maria

Because her virginity is profaned in Europe, Maria is also diminished. Her hair is cut as a symbol of this diminishment and her fecundity, because of the injuries she may have sustained in the course of her torture, is in some question. After her torture, she is found by the pagan gypsies "hidden in the rocks" (28), reminiscent of The Gospel of Matthew 16: 18, "Thou art Peter [Πέτρος], and upon this rock I will build my church...." and Psalm 18: 2, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress." In the Bible, God is the Rock upon which the Church is built. The plurality of the "rocks" in which she is found is reflective of the disarray of the church in modern Europe. When she is found by the pagan gypsies, they consider her ugly and not worth the effort; and yet Pilar/Gaia forces them to carry her. Maria/Mary ceases to be a person and becomes a Marian pattern carried on by thousands of years of pagan tradition beaten and driven on by the Gaia structure of life and death which must survive at all cost.

Most of Maria's instruction centers around cooking and the fire. "The Great Mother is the mother of the stones, of stone implements, and of fire" (Neumann 260), it is only natural, therefore, that this should be the centre of Pilar's instruction. In several places throughout the novel, both Robert Jordan, but more often Pilar must warn Maria to be careful in her tending of the fire.

As Neumann has pointed out, "The woman is the natural nourishing

principle and hence mistress of everything that implies nourishment" (284). Her domain and the domain of Pilar/the Great Mother is the cave and the enclosed dwelling where food is prepared and served. It is in the cave that Pilar raises her long wooden spoon — phallus, wand, and symbol of her authority — while standing over the fire — symbol of her pagan altar — in the establishment of her authority over her husband. As Neuman has also pointed out,

...at the center of the mysteries over which the female group presided stood the guarding and tending of the fire. As in the house round about, female domination is symbolized in its center, the fireplace, the seat of warmth and food preparation, the "hearth," which is also the original altar. (284)

As I have pointed out elsewhere, Hemingway's women use food and its preparation as symbols of domestic authority ("The Warrior and the Wanderer..." 48-54).

Maria does not remain the same throughout the text. At least part of the irony in the opening of Chapter Sixteen is that Maria commands that she may serve. A careful reading shows the following supporting evidence :

"Let me...", "I will..."

"Let me...", "Do not let..."

"Sit down and put them on..."

"Go sit down and dry thy feet and let me..."

"Keep that under thee until they shoes are dry." (182-83)

And when Pilar tells her to "blow up the fire" a bit more, Maria responds, "Blow it thyself... I am searching for the bottle that El Sordo left" (183) so that she can provide Robert Jordan with a drink of whisky. This is not request language. This is command language. It is a hint of the emergence of the Great Mother image that Lederer and other scholars have found in

the image of Mary beginning after the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. when Mary was declared Theotokos, Mother of God. Early representations of the Virgin Mary after this become so intertwined at times with the Great Mother in her manifold representations that her identity with the mother of Jesus often became all but lost. Nevertheless, Maria remains an innocent, and thus Pilar does not rebuke her. She watches over her as she would watch over herself as the mother of mothers.

VI. Pilar/Maria/Robert Connection

Pilar/Gaia will accept any scheme that works. When Robert proposes that she be sent to the city where there are homes where she could be taught to work with children, Pilar is happy with the suggestion. When he plans to take her to the United States with him, she is happy with that. The important thing for Pilar is that the Mary manifestation of the Mother of mothers survives. Where and what form this takes is secondary.

Robert at the end will die. We do not see him die because that would make him a person named Robert rather than the soul of the collectivity of the American man. He does not marry Maria. We do not know whether she has been impregnated by him or not, but probably she has not and Gaia will have to find another mate to keep the tradition alive elsewhere. Baker has claimed that,

The woman-witch dialectic is marked often in the book. In this instance, the woman withholds what the witch has gloomily discovered. Her certainty that Jordan will die has motivated her in bringing the lovers together. This is done both for the therapeutic effect of a healthy love affair on Maria, and in order to give Jordan, through Maria, as much life as three days will hold. (253)

This remains the argument most commonly held by scholars today. Yet there is something terribly awkward about it as an explanation. It im-

plies that if a rape victim is just coupled with the right hero/lover, all of her nightmares and the horrors of her rape and torture will soon dissipate into nothing. The young Maria might be excused for holding to such a fantasy, but Pilar surely knows better.

The reason Pilar allows the relationship between Robert and Maria is that she desires to preserve Maria and place a controlling hand on Robert. Paglia points out that,

The Great Mother's main disciple is her son and lover... The boy gods are 'phallic consorts of the Great Mother, drones serving the queen bee, who are killed off as soon as they have performed their duty of fecundation.' Mother love smothers what it embraces. ... Masculinity flows from the great mother as an aspect of herself and is recalled and canceled by her at will. Her son is a servant of her cult. There is no going beyond her. Motherhood blankets existence. (52-53).

So just as there is a struggle between Robert, the progeny of Western culture and Pablo who reins as Hades over the Underworld, so also there is an ongoing struggle between Robert and Pilar who reins as Demeter, the Great Mother. Maria's role in this configuration then is Kore, the daughter of Demeter because Demeter will take her daughter back as soon as the son is killed off. Robert's function has been only to reach some form of completion such as blowing the bridge or impregnating Maria/Kore. But more on this later.

VI. Pilar

Pilar is unquestionably one of the great mysteries of the novel. Lynn lends us some assistance in his biography, where he has argued that "In several respects, Pilar is a gypsy version of Grace Hemingway, especially in her domination of her husband, Pablo, her attraction to the sexually ambiguous Maria... and her operatic way of speaking" (489). Perhaps

more significantly, Griffin has also noted that, "There was one story from his youth Ernest was never quite able to tell. In an almost incoherent draft, a precursor of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, he revealed how much it would have meant if Grace Hemingway had not made him try to earn her love" (222).

Thus, I would argue that we come closer to the truth when we view Pilar as the Great Mother, more of a complex of goddesses, both good and terrible, than someone Hemingway necessarily knew personally, nevertheless, having her origin in Hemingway's own origin and experience.

As Pilar is walking along with Maria and Joaquin during the visit to Sordo, Robert says to himself:

Look at the Pilar woman... Look at her walking along with those two kids. You could not get three better-looking products of Spain than those. She is like a mountain and the boy and the girl are like young trees. (125)

with regard to the mountain image, Neumann notes that,

It is no accident that the greatest Mother Goddess of the early cults was named Isis, "the seat," "the throne," the symbol of which she bears on her head; and the king who "takes possession" of the earth, the Mother Goddess, does so by sitting on her in the literal sense of the word. The enthroned Mother Goddess lives in the sacral symbol of the throne. The king comes to power by "mounting the throne," and so takes his place on the lap of the Great Goddess, the earth — he becomes her son. ... The original throne was the mountain, which combines the symbols of earth, cave, bulk, and height; the mountain was the immobile, sedentary symbol that visibly rules over the land. (99)

Thus throne and mountain and Gaia are all one and the same.

Another clue to uncovering the mystery of Pilar is "The Great Whore" imagery that runs throughout the novel. As Sordo's men are being overrun, one of them says, "Who is a whore of whores is Pilar... That whore knows we are dying here." And later Agustin says to her, "Don't speak that way woman... Thou hast the tongue of the great whore." But long before this, at the beginning of the novel, this aspect of Pilar is revealed in her banter with Agustin. Referring to Robert and Maria, Agustin speaks with Pilar :

"What are they doing in there?" Agustin now asked confidentially. "Nothing," Pilar told him. "*Nada*. We are, after all, in the spring, animal."

"Animal," said Agustin, relishing the word, "Animal. And thou, Daughter of the great whore of whores. I befoul myself in the milk of the springtime."

Pilar slapped him on the shoulder.

"You," she said, and laughed that booming laugh. "You lack variety in your cursing. But you have force."

The "force" that Agustin has in this context is the truth of what he is saying. From Inanna who is the earliest Babylonian manifestation of the Great Mother to Aphrodite, Pilar is the Daughter of the Great Whore.

The Great Mother is also closely connected with the country of Spain. According to Lederer, many of the earliest artifacts of the Great Mother goddess had their origins in Spain :

These women were goddesses ; and for a period five times as long as recorded history — far longer than any other deities — they alone were worshiped, and in their own peculiar manner. ... They were of the earth — they were the earth itself, and they were adored in caves or crevices in the earth... These megalithic structures, appearing in Southern Spain around 3500 B.C. and probably spreading thence eastward... (10)

The bisexuality of the Great Mother is most pronounced in Mayan, Aztec, and many Malay cults ; however, it is also evident in Crete where Aphrodite has both male and female sex organs. The bisexuality of the Great Mother in her many manifestations arises as a result of her anger against her hero/sons who continually fail her in one way or another, most usually by allowing themselves to be killed by her. In the case of Robert Jordan, Pilar already knows that he is going to die ; and we see her anger and rage against the rebellious son/lover/dying god in the way she confronts him before she sends the couple off to make love in the heather and tells him that when she was younger that she could have taken Maria away from him ; and Robert Jordan is forced to agree with her. According to Neuman,

...the woman is the original seeress... And over and over again we find this mantic woman connected with the symbols of caldron and cave, renewal and rebirth, but also of inspiration and magic. ... [Her] word of fate, for it proclaims that the powers have decreed, and curse as well as blessing are dependent on the magical rituals that rest in the hands of the women. (296-97)

Pilar, whose place is constantly over caldron and fire with phallic spoon upraised, reads his future in the lines of his palm. And while he denies that he believes in palm reading, he declares with equal vehemence that Gaia/the earth/Pilar moved beneath him as he made love with Maria. That entire encounter is worth quoting in full for all that it reveals.

"And leave the mysteries," Robert Jordan said. "We have enough work and enough things that will be done without complicating it with chicken-crut. Fewer mysteries and more work."

"I see," said Pilar and nodded her head in agreement. "And listen, *Inglés*," she said laughing and smiling at him. "Did the earth move?"

"Yes, God-damn you. It moved."

Pilar laughed and laughed and stood looking at Robert Jordan laughing.

"Oh, *Inglés. Inglés*," she said laughing. "You are very comical. You must do much work now to regain thy dignity." (160)

Robert Jordan understands none of this. It is the mysteries of Pilar which have made the earth move. Notice that the love scene does not read like any love scene that we have ever read before and still called it a love scene.

For him it was a dark passage which led to nowhere, then to nowhere, then again to nowhere, once again to nowhere, always and forever to nowhere, heavy on the elbows in the earth to nowhere, dark, never any end to nowhere, hung on all time always to unknowing nowhere, this time and again for always to nowhere, now beyond all bearing up, up, up and into nowhere, suddenly, scaldingly, holdingly all nowhere gone and time absolutely still and they were both there, time having stopped and he felt the earth move out and away from under them. (145)

There is no sensuality at all in this extremely brief "love scene." It isn't even until the end that Robert even seems to realize that there is another person underneath him with "and they were both there." As if to emphasize the lack of sensuality in this scene, when Robert and Maria meet up with Pilar again twelve pages later, she says with some amazement, "Oh... You have terminated already?"

Speaking of the final love scene in the novel, Fiedler's assertion that "in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* Hemingway has written the most absurd love scene in the history of the American novel" (316), has, if nothing else, provided a great deal of comic relief for Hemingway scholars working hard to pinpoint the major influence of the "love scene." Some have pointed to Molly Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Others like Brogan, have tried to point to Gertrude Stein, and say that Hemingway was trying to outdo the mistress

of this style of writing. Brogan points out that,

While the sexual ecstasy of this scene intentionally borders on religious ecstasy (thereby extending a venerable *topoi* in literature over the centuries), the temporal concentration of "this was what had been and now and what ever was to come" into the *continuous present* (as Stein puts it) or the "always now" (as Hemingway puts it...) is more than a simple inversion of the *alpha* and *omega* of Christian liturgy (specifically that Christ has died, is risen, and will come again). (90)

Here as with Gajdusek, Brogan simply returns to Stein's "Composition as Explanation" and drops the conclusion that it seems to me she should have arrived at from her own example. That is, the love scene is an extension of the love scene in the heather when the earth moved :

...this was what had been and now and whatever was to come...
now is thy prophet... where are you and where am I... one and
only one... there is no other one but one now... (334)

It is an inversion of the Christian liturgy, but it is also much more. It is the cry of the American for whom truth is embodied in the present. Outside of the now there is no reality. "Now is thy prophet" must be read in concert with the previous major love scene in the heather discussed above when the earth moved. This is not Leopold Bloom making love with Molly where in the sound and cadence we hear Molly breathing, we feel her moving, and we hear her cries of anticipation toward orgasm until she is engulfed in it.

At the end of this so-called "ecstatic" experience, Robert thanks Maria as an "other" person when he says "Oh Maria I love thee and I thank thee for this." And poor Maria has to beg this oaf as politely as she can to shut up :

Maria said, "Do not speak. It is better if we do not speak."

"I must tell thee for it is a great thing."

"Nay ——"

"Rabbit ——"

But she held him tight and turned her head away and he asked softly, "Is it pain, rabbit?"

He is like an adolescent boy who simply cannot contain himself nor does he even remotely understand what he has lost.

VII. Conclusion

In his discussion of this novel, Idema has made the point that "In Hemingway's work, neither the church nor communism is a solution to what ails modern culture (in 1932 he wrote to John Dos Passos, 'I suppose I am an anarchist... to hell with the Church when it becomes a State and to hell with the State when it becomes a church.')" (177). Hemingway like his protagonist Robert Jordan was the ultimate unbeliever. However, unlike his protagonist, he had a keen understanding of his unbelief and of the implications of it.

Robert Jordan lives in awe of European art and history but then finally dies to Greco-Roman myths and Judeo-Christian traditions, leaving their greatest representatives —— Pilar/Gaia and Maria/Mary —— to ride off side by side like Demeter and Kore. If Mary has been impregnated, she may survive as Holy Mother Church for another generation. If she has not, she will merely dissolve inside of Gaia only to reappear in another form years hence when she is needed. Hemingway leaves it open and unanswered.

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